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2008-12-05

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Naval Postgraduate School Public Affairs Office

Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA.

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DRMI Helps Partner Nations Get More Bang for the Buck

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By Barbara Honegger, Military Affairs Journalist

Posted December 5, 2008

For more than four decades, the Defense Resources Management Institute (DRMI) at the Naval Postgraduate School has helped allied and partner nations get more bang for their defense dollar.

"We've been here 43 years providing education in defense resources management," said DRMI Director Professor C. J. LaCivita. "Since our first course in 1965, over 30,000 officers and defense professionals have come through our multi-disciplinary programs, both at NPS and in mobile education programs in the U.S. and overseas -- 14,000 from all U.S. military services and the Department of Defense and over 16,000 international officers and officials from 162 countries. This is a tremendous record that we're very proud of, and there's still a great need for it.

"One of the Pentagon's most important initiatives is defense institution building -- building the capacities and strength of our coalition partners, both in the Cold War and now with the newly emerging democracies and the war on terror," said LaCivita. "And what we do at DRMI -- applying analytical techniques to defense planning, programming and budgeting and encouraging transparency and accountability -- is a major part of that effort.

"Whether here at the Naval Postgraduate School or in DRMI mobile courses around the world, we team teach exclusively with NPS faculty, and all our course materials are authored by our own instructors, who are experts and leaders in their fields," LaCivita noted. "DRMI currently has 23 faculty and is looking to hire additional instructors. There is no tuition for U.S. DoD personnel -- parent commands pay only per diem and travel -- and on request our faculty also provides executive courses at other DoD sites and in the national capital area.

"The great thing about DRMI's programs is that they're win-win," LaCivita stressed. "Our participants learn from us, they learn from each other, and we learn from them. Each country is unique, but all ministries of defense face the same basic set of challenges and the principles of efficient and effective defense resources management are universal."

The Institute is currently in the final week of one of its biannual 11-week International Defense Management Courses, attended by 51 officers and defense professionals from 24 countries.

"This course is very important for our Ministry of Defense because it's about what I do in my job, which is currently senior officer for the main defense planning directorate of our general staff," said Ukrainian Army Maj. Iryna Bystrova, the present course class leader who will soon become brigadier general. "I will be reporting everything I learn to my directorate, which places a high value on this program. Ukraine participates in both the four-week and 11-week DRMI courses and has for at least five years."

"This program is extremely valuable as I'm approaching the management stage in my career," agreed Royal Jordanian Air Force Col. Manhal Hamdan Mohammed Al Qudah, a wing commander and fighter pilot. "Everything I learn I will be able to carry with me and apply to all aspects of defense resources management -- both human resources and material resources. It is also a great honor to have been selected for a program that has been attended by our King Abdullah, as well as by other members of the Royal Family."

"I'm very glad that I've taken part in this course," said Albanian Army Lt. Col. Adi Ndoni, an instructor at his country's defense academy. "I'll take back what I've learned and we will be incorporating parts of the program into our own curriculum. I'm also honored to be part of a course that was attended by our current Minister of Interior Affairs, Bujar Nishani, in 1995."

In addition to the 11-week course and its mobile international courses, DRMI teaches a four-week Defense Resources Management Course for U.S. and international participants five times a year and a four-week Senior Defense Management Course once a year in the summer. The senior course covers similar curricular areas but places far greater emphasis on big picture strategic thinking and national goal setting.

"We've recently done a major restructuring of our senior course," LaCivita explained. "Before, our faculty designed the problems and scenarios. Now, the participants come up with their own strategic goals relevant to their actual situations, and determine how best to achieve them by applying the analytic tools they learn in the course."

Many DRMI senior course graduates have been promoted or elevated to the highest ranking positions in their home countries.

"Outstanding examples are Jordan's King Abdullah, whose authority and responsibilities include commander in chief of a critical Middle East ally, and then Latvian Army Colonel Girts

Kristovskis," LaCivita recalled. "Some time after Col. Kristovskis was a participant in our senior course, I got a call from the Latvian embassy. 'Do you remember Col. Kristovskis?' the official asked. 'Well, he's now the Minister of Defense. He's coming to the U.S. and wants to know if you'd like him to come to DRMI and give a seminar.' You can guess what my answer was. I said, 'Yes.' When he was here, he told the seminar that the reason Latvia was successful in getting into NATO 'was because of what I learned here in this room.'"

In addition to Latvia, DRMI alumni have served as or currently are ministers of defense of Argentina, Honduras, the Philippines, Romania and the Slovak Republic. Graduates also include a Lithuanian Vice Minister of Defense; Chiefs of Naval Operations of Argentina, Bangladesh, the Philippines and Uruguay; the Commandant of the Argentine Marine Corps; the Chairman of the NATO Military Committee, Chiefs of the Joint Staffs of Argentina, Colombia and Indonesia; Ambassadors from the Czech Republic, Lithuania, the Philippines and Romania; and Chiefs of Staff of the Argentine Army and Air Force, Bangladesh Army, German Army, Honduran Army, Jordanian Air Force, Malawi Defense Forces, Mongolian Armed Forces, Namibian Army, Royal Norwegian Air Force, Army of Senegal, Spanish Air Force, Surinam Army, Swedish Air Force and Land Forces, and Taiwan Air Force and Army.

International participants are nominated by their home country defense ministry or service and are vetted through their U.S. embassy. U.S. officers and DoD civilians participate under the umbrella of the Department of Defense Foreign Military Sales Program or the State Department's International Military Education and Training Program.

Over the last three years, DRMI has also instituted shorter in-residence courses, including two-week programs on risk management and multi-criteria decision making; an eight-day program on budget preparation, execution and accountability; and a one-week course on streamlining government through outsourcing, privatization and public-private partnerships.

DRMI also offers four units of Naval Postgraduate School graduate education credit for its resident courses. NPS participants must attend one of two DRMI courses and pass an examination.

A new course is also being created at the request of DoD's new comptroller, Graduate School of Business and Public Policy Professor on leave Douglas Brook.

"We're excited that Doug Brook has been named DoD's new comptroller and has asked us to develop a new one-week course, which we're in the process of doing," said LaCivita. "He will also chair our DRMI Policy Guidance Council, which oversees our operations."

An important aspect of senior international participants' experience while at NPS is DRMI's Community Host Program, through which foreign senior military officers and civilian officials are matched with local volunteers who serve as informal ambassador-educators to welcome them, show them the area and introduce them to the American culture and way of life, especially family life.

Being a host of a participant can be quite satisfying. Knowledge of a foreign language is not necessary as all participants are fluent in English, and time also isn't an issue. "We ask that they meet and share an activity, like a family meal, dining out or a local site-seeing trip, just two times a month and phone once a week, though they can do more if they'd like to," said DRMI Field Studies Program Manager Charlie Orsburn. "What we're looking for is quality time spent together that makes their stay both pleasant and educational, beginning with the very important opening reception."

The Community Host Program currently has about 100 volunteers and is looking for new hosts. "We'd definitely like to encourage NPS faculty and students, married or single, to sign up for this genuinely rewarding and interesting program," said Orsburn. "Anyone who's interested, please contact me at clorsbur@nps.edu."

For more information on DRMI and its programs, go to www.nps.edu/drmj.

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